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## REPORT OF THE SECRETARY AND EDITOR

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Three years ago the Secretary reported to the Society the outstanding facts relative to the state of the organization during the first term of his service. The present number marks the close of the second term of three years. In the absence of large and well attended meetings of the members, where discussions both of scientific and business details would place in the minutes much that would enlighten the members as to the work of the Society, it appears that a triennial report by the Secretary may well supplement the annual reports of the Treasurer and the Custodian.

It seems necessary, for the sake of efficiency in such a Society, that a large amount of the leadership and decision of policies fall upon the Secretary. The organization pays for this freedom of action on his part, however, in a certain loss of responsibility and mutuality on the part of the membership. The Secretary feels very strongly the lack of positive and constructive,—or for that matter any kind of,—criticism.

Attention was recalled in the last report to the transitional period through which the Society has passed in the last quarter of a century, and to the decision four years ago to try to find a function for the Society which would be at once worthy of its best traditions and place it in a position in which it may continue, in spite of the multiplication of special societies, to serve American science and scientists. It is too much to hope that this has been done as well as it might have been done. Yet evidences are not wanting that the policy adopted then has been on the whole well chosen.

There is, however, one group of our most faithful and effective members whom we have not been able to serve as the Secretary would like. This is the group of students who are working with the microscope independently, usually out of contact with colleges and laboratories, browsing more or less in the numerous interesting fields opened to them by the microscope. In many cases they are working in an amateur way, more or less intensively upon one or more of the groups of microscopic forms. In some instances these students are serving, by private correspondence, as a clearing-house for information for amateurs. The Secretary has the impression from correspondence that this group is again becoming larger than it has been for 25 or 30 years. It finds our research articles too technical and would greatly prize a much enlarged discussion of elementary and advanced, up-to-date methods of manipulation, such as distinguished the "Journal of Applied Microscopy" some 15 years ago. A department devoted to these interests would probably find acceptance with a considerable number of people. Two English journals,—the "English Mechanic and World of Science" and the "Journal of Micrology and Natural History Mirror" serve this end in some measure. The Secretary-editor has tried, in an experimental way, to relate the Society to some of the local amateur microscopical clubs with the hope that at least a small department of this type of material might be established in the *Transactions* to encourage again in America high grade amateur work on the part of intelligent people who do not expect to use the microscope for professional ends. Thus far we have been unable to do anything significant in this direction. All his own spare time is so taken up in carrying out the policy adopted as our main objective that he could not, even if his ability ran in this direction, do the work himself. It has not been possible to find any one at once able and willing to do this in the large and scientific way which would be necessary to make it worth while. Suggestions from the members will be welcome.

In other respects the work of the Society seems to have progressed reasonably. The usual volume of four numbers and about 300 pages has been published each year. It is still true that we do not receive contributions enough in the varied fields of interest

to make it possible for us to select articles in such a way as to furnish a balanced biological ration. For some years the zoological contributions have dominated. Thanks to our botanical friends, chief among whom was Professor Bessey, a much larger botanical element has appeared in the *Transactions*. For various reasons it has been impossible to issue the quarterly promptly in the month of its date.

The Secretary has been particularly disappointed in respect to one class of contributions which he hoped to feature in the *Transactions*. It is a strong conviction of his that nothing we can do would serve American science so distinctively and give the *Transactions* so welcome a place in every biological library as a series of digests covering part by part the special fields that go to make up biology. If this territory were marked off into 20 or 25 subdivisions, and an expert were to present once in five or six years a thorough-going summary of each of these, we could by giving one such digest in each issue cover the field in this time. Such a digest would not undertake to be exhaustive as might be needed by the men in the field; but would be interpretative of the most important results, the main conclusions and tendencies and prospects, together with such references to the important papers as would serve the need of the student outside the particular field rather than of those within it. A few such have appeared and these in every way have confirmed the editor in his conviction of the tremendous service such an enterprise would render to the rank and file of American students and teachers of biology. The attempt has thus far failed because the men who are most able to command both the territory and the audience are unable to command the time. The Secretary is coming to be of the opinion that the income of our Spencer-Tolles Fund apportioned as an honorarium for digests of this kind would render a more distinctive and a more vital service than it can do as our present rules demand.

Several suggestions have come urging that emphasis be placed upon the technic and methods of biology and microscopy. Some progress in this direction is being made and more is planned. We have not yet secured a steady stream of such communications; but

there has been an encouraging response. The Secretary urges strongly that every member who sees this notice "highly resolve" to supply this department with a description, illustrated if desirable, of every new unpublished device for investigation, illustration, and teaching which his own experience approves; and furthermore secure similar returns from all his colleagues, whether members of this Society or not. There is no present point at which so vital a service can be rendered the *Transactions* and the membership by the individual member. We shall be glad to become a clearing house for the best biological methods developed in America.

We are still growing in numbers and in financial strength. When the present Secretary took charge in 1909 there were on the roll 226 names of members and 33 subscribing libraries and individuals. A considerable number of these quickly dropped out. In all, 127 of this list have ceased to be members, leaving 99 members at present whose connection with the Society goes back of 1911. In the six years there have been added 300 members and 67 subscribers. Of these members 57 or about 20% have discontinued. Of the subscribers only three or four have been lost. There is now an enrollment of 343 members and 97 subscribers, or a total of 440 supporters. One of the chief deductions from our membership history is that the list of subscribing libraries should, if possible, be run up to 150 or 200. This would furnish a group of supporters not nearly so fluctuating as individual memberships. A library once possessed of a fairly complete file of our volumes is increasingly likely to continue its connection. Because of this the Executive Committee at the Cleveland meeting authorized the Secretary to adopt with libraries a liberal policy in the distribution of partial sets made up of those back volumes of which we have excessive numbers. We have been able to supply partial sets, sometimes running as high as 18 or 20 volumes, on condition that the library would begin a subscription with Vol. 29, at which point we began to publish in parts. The Secretary will welcome correspondence from members connected with institutions with growing and permanent libraries, which may not be

able to buy a complete set, relative to the conditions of this distribution of the back volumes.

The total resources of the Treasurer in 1911 were \$782. The annual resources for the succeeding years were \$1234, \$1433, \$1379, and in 1915, \$1522. The society is very nearly to a point of self-support, which will not demand a high-pressure campaign for members, but merely demand effort enough to replace those who are lost. It ought to be possible within the next year or two to push the members and subscribers to the 500 mark.

The Spencer-Tolles Fund under the wise and enthusiastic management of the custodian, Mr. Pflaum, has climbed steadily during the period, from \$3352 in January, 1912. The custodian will report at the next meeting close to \$5000. This will mean an annual income of \$300,—which may be devoted to the advancement of science. The Secretary urges those members of the Society who are engaged in research, in any field where such a grant would signally advance the investigation, to make inquiry of the Chairman of the Committee on Grants,—Professor H. B. Ward, University of Ill., Urbana, Ill.